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ABSTRACT

The arts are basic educational processes that involve students with different abilities and from differing age groups in sensory perception. This perception, augmented by the use of art compositions, establishes a critical dialogue between the medium and the viewer. What one views, sees, and observes in an art piece serves to create a relationship, much like that between reader and text. With visual arts, the processes of receiving conceptual images and later forming reactions to such images are inexorably bound to higher order thinking skills and numerous aspects of creativity. Learners in current educational settings must be provided with possibilities to view, analyze, and respond to the arts. Learners should have a means through which they may look, feel, and listen to artwork. This realization would relate the curriculum to real life learning and afford the students greater opportunities for academic, social, and personal achievement. Agreement has recently been reached on the importance of arts education and the necessity to include the arts in state and federal education goals. Suggestions are offered for integrating the visual arts into the academic curriculum under the headings: personal education goals and instruction and research. Suggestions for classroom activities are given in the following categories: illustrations in children's literature; children's art; calendars; paintings and photographs; billboards, advertisements, and bumper stickers; and computer technology. (NAV)

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The Visual Arts and Qualitative Research:

Diverse and Emerging Voices

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

**"I'm a pilgrim on the edge,
On the edge of my perception.
We are travelers at the edge,
We are always at the edge of our perception."**

- Scott Mutter

The Essence of Visual Arts ... Selected Definitions

"Art is a human activity, consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of external signs, hands on to others feelings he has worked through, and other people are infected by these feelings and also experience them."

Leo Tolstoy

"Illustrations have as much to say as the text. The trick is to say the same thing, but in a different way. It's no good being an illustrator who is saying a lot that is on his or her mind, if it has nothing to do with the text ... the artist must override the story, but he must also override his own ego for the sake of the story."

Maurice Sendak

"A work should contain its total meaning within itself and should impress it on the spectator before he even knows the subject."

Henri Matisse

"Art is all that cannot be suppressed."

Anonymous

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Introduction

Visual art is the soul of people and nations; it reflects sublime happiness and incomprehensible misery. It is a means by which we get to know ourselves; it is our path of life and death, a mirror of our existence.

Images of our existence surround us like swarms of fireflies on clear summer nights. All around us, we see references to who we were, signs of who we are, and, at times, indicators of who we will become. Daily, we are bombarded with illustrations, bumper stickers, posters, paintings, graffitti, billboards, sculptures, signs, photographs, advertisements -- all visual stimuli. While style, format, and type of sensory data may be questionable in terms of traditional "art" definitions, such data are, nevertheless, examples of "human activity" which either "illustrate a text" or simply reflect "all that cannot be suppressed." Man does not live without art, for art furnishes, adorns, and brings vitality to his solitary existence. But man is also sometimes timid and reserved in how he responds or chooses to respond to the multitude of messages that pass before his eyes. Some "pilgrims and travelers" acknowledge, scrutinize, and even analyze the surrounding visual art, for they are "always at the edge" of their perception. Others, however, ignore visual art, viewing it as a mere fringe on the ends of a greater landscape.

Although the "landscape" can be exceptionally important, elimination of the "fringe" as a substantive feature may result in a total picture that lacks depth, quality, and meaning. Unfortunately, dismissal of the visual arts as integral components of our daily lives is commonplace.

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The Status Quo of Visual Arts ... Educational Realities

Across the nation, the scope of visual art education has been reduced in verious educational settings. In elementary grades, art education is generally provided on a rotating basis and considered one of the "exploratory" subjects. Some schools utilize the services of an art educator who teaches selected topics, techniques, and history during a special "art class" period. While students are afforded opportunity to explore and create, such instruction is conducted outside of the curriculum. Integrated curricula which include art education as a common element are rarely found. As a result, elementary grade students tend to view art as a separate topic, far removed from the core subjects such as language, social studies, or science, to name a few.

At other grade levels, art instruction continues in a similar vein. Although middle schools and high schools (for the most part) continue to include art education as part of their curriculum, the variety of course offerings has been diluted; some have been redistributed to vocational or "tech prep" classes; while others have simply been "downsized" due to budgetary issues. As in the elementary grades, art education is organized, directed, and expedited independently with little, if any, ties to the ongoing curriculum.

Both at the elementary and the secondary levels, some schools have been fortunate to incorporate artist-in-residence programs which offer a periodic investigation into the life and works of an artist. In addition, some schools provide a choice of art-related courses for gifted students under the

"enrichment" program, while others have established after-school workshops open to pupils who have nowhere to go once the school day ends. Parent volunteers and teachers generally furnish the instruction; at times, an expert in the field is called upon to provide a "special workshop." Though such trimmings are commendable, art education continues to be on the fringe of the curriculum.

Higher education settings reveal a tangled web of colorful portpourri. In order to fulfill the general requirements, some colleges and universities ask for a specific art course; others accept any "art appreciation" class; and still others term a craft class as being sufficient. Requirements in teacher education programs that focus on pedagogy and methodology also fluctuate from the absurd to the mundane. Some demand several "teaching of art" classes; others are pleased with one basic methods course. Generally, art education in colleges and universitites seems to replicate the pattern that exists in K-12 schools ... art is perceived as singularly different from other academic subjects and thus, is taught in a detached, segregated manner.

Unfortunately, such instruction is detrimental to the basic concept of learning in that we do not learn in isolation, but rather, in a rich and deeply integrated fashion -- pulling threads from diverse disciplines and grasping elements of what we know so that we can explore, investigate, design, and construct new knowledge. Further, such instruction is harmful to the potential creativity and power of expression that each and every student possesses. The research on multiple intelligences and diverse learning styles

is a clear indicator of "what could be" if methodology and pedagogy were restructured to address more than merely the norm, or the average, or the group in the middle. In education, we have systematically subscribed to the notion that the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few. At times, however, perhaps the reverse is also true -- that the needs of the few outweigh the needs of the many.

As educators, we are, invariably, always at the edge of our perception. Here, we see, perceive, intuite, experiment, think, and respond in our own personal ways. As educators, what we do at the edge of our perception is critical to the manner, style, and design through which we can open new worlds for students across all grade levels, K-12 and beyond. Understandably, trudging through new territories is difficult and frightening. Not all educators are comfortable with "teaching" art; not all are sure of their ability to instruct outside their discipline; and not all are convinced that art is an integral fraction in the pie of life. If asked to teach the visual arts or incorporate them into the curriculum, many educators will, undoubdtedly wince at the prospect, for all of us fear the unknown. We dread to delve into a foreign universe, we fear to uncover moss from a rolling stone, and we hesitate to forge a new path in the dark woods. This is human nature; it is neither a fault nor a failing, but merely a statement of fact.

While we may be apprehensive about wandering into a relatively unknown arena, we, as educators, simply cannot continue to ignore the power of the visual arts in education. Our task, then, is to uncover the

potential of the visual arts as a vehicle for instructional delivery and a means of meeting individual needs of diverse populations.

The Power of Visual Arts ... To Go Where No Man Has Gone Before

Art is not only therapeutic; it is also a means of self-creation. As we create, we come to better know ourselves and our audience. Art is a teacher.

The power of visual arts is deep and far reaching. Unconditionally, the visual arts are a medium through which diverse individuals can find supportive voices in addressing issues of cultural differences and gender roles (Ember & Ember, 1990).

- The arts invite learners to see and express their world in a uniquely individual fashion; thus, diverse individuals and groups can share personal and cultural stories and myhts, and find expressive voice for problems, concerns, emotions, and anxieties about social and poilitical conflict, racism, acceptance, and difference (Gardner, 1991).
- The arts encourage a "conversation with technological tools that can be used as a medium through which students can address issues of cultural differences, racism, and violence (Stephen, J.C., 1996).

The arts offer educators important alternatives to traditional learning paradigms. Why so? Because the arts have not "one truth" or one "correct" answer, but many valid and possible interpretations (Hanlon, 1990; Herzog, 1990; Brooks & Brooks, 1993; Bruner, 1985).

- The arts connect with a variety of learning styles and intelligences, offering teachers numerous opportunities to maximize both the learning environment and the academic achievement of students who fall outside the traditional learning paradigms.
- The arts provide all students with an enriched and expanded sense of identity and self-worth.

Through exposure to the visual arts, students may discover a multitude of wealth in various content areas such as science and social studies (NCSS, 1992; Zarillo, 1991; Boorstin, 1984).

- The arts are a valid source of knowledge for teachers and teacher educators (Stephen, V.P., 1993).
- The arts offer a treasure chest of paintings and photographs that can be used as vehicles for accessing rich information about culture, gender roles, education, religion, politics.

Responses to the arts are, therefore, an undeniably rich source for qualitative research studies (Vaughan, 1987; Wachowiak, 1985).

- The arts, as a qualitative research tool, offer teachers a bountiful opportunity to explore personal, social, political, and aesthetic perspectives of diverse students.
- The arts yield multi-dimensional understandings of, and respect for, differences in both teachers and students.

Visual Arts in Education ... Ensuring a Place in the Curriculum

Recent state and federal legislation has called for a re-examination of the arts in the curriculum. Agreement has been reached not only regarding the importance of arts education, but also the necessity to include the arts in state and federal goals. National goals now require that student demonstrate competency in subject areas that include the arts, and state goals now contain a fine arts component. Educators across the nation have been asked to formulate arts education goals that reflect the needs of students in their schools, as well as those that address their personal need areas in terms of knowledge and expertise. Today, arts education appears to have finally

captured a niche in the academic curriculum. What can educators do to maintain this momentum?

First, educators need to explore their own feelings, perceptions, and ideas about the arts in education. Second, they need to become aware of the power of visual arts as an instructional medium. And third, they need to develop plans for including the arts into daily instruction. The following section provides some suggestions for integrating the visual arts into the academic curriculum.

Personal Education Goals

- Become more aware of personal artistic capabilities
- Develop a fuller understanding of the visual arts as an alternative source of knowledge
- Use visual arts as a springboard for instruction
- Incorporate visual arts as a means of meeting different learning styles and multiple intelligences
- Explore visual arts as a research methodology

Instruction and Research

ILLUSTRATIONS IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

- expose students to the ethnographic quality of art through thematic studies
- enhance the scope of art education by studying different art styles
- involve students in author/illustrator studies
- investigate wordless picture books that rely solely on the power of the visual arts

CHILDREN'S ART

- explore literature consisting of text and art created by children
- encourage students to draw important events in their lives and write corresponding poetry
- have students sculpt, draw, paint, etch, or use computer technology to create artworks
- invite students to develop and design their own school "art museum"
- *** this could be open to the public as an "exhibition"

- *** brochures and newsletters inviting parents, school personnel, and community member could also be created by students

CALENDARS

- use outdated or current art calendars as supplementary instructional material
- *** science, social studies, language arts could easily be incorporated
- create culture cards made from calendar illustrations depicting a specific culture or nation or historical event
- *** what does the grouping reveal about culture, history, sociology, geography, and/or technology
- *** what can we gauge about the people -- who they were, where they have been, where they are going, who are they now
- have students research calendars to create a photomural of their own communities, ancestry, or history of a particular period
- encourage students take photographs or make drawings tied to a specific calendar theme
- *** these could be duplicated and distributed as gifts (computer software could be used to create the calendar format)
- have students research the "sale" bins at local stores for marked down calendars
- *** what does the collection imply with respect to the public's purchasing habits -- what themes/topics were popular or unpopular

PAINTINGS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

- use museum poster reproductions of paintings to examine the context of peoples' lives with regard to technology, gender roles, education, wealth, etc.
- have students create posters of their own lives, relationships, and important events
- ask students and parents to look through family belongings in order to find sketches, paintings, or drawings created by family members
- *** these could be assembled as a mural portraying family history
- investigate numerous photographic archives about certain periods in history such as space exploration, industrial innovation, international diplomacy, television, etc.
- examine magazines and pmaphlets for quality prints depicting history, current events, world leaders, etc.
- have students create a photobiography of famous people in American history

- encourage students to represent their heritage by using photographs or copies (many photos can easily be copied/xeroxed or duplicated by photo finishing services)

BILLBOARDS, ADVERTISEMENTS, AND BUMPER STICKERS

- use copies of advertisements as a tool for teaching values and consumer education
- have students use billboards and advertisements to create a pictograph of ideas, events, and people who represent the current "American portrait"
- assign small groups of students to investigate bumper stickers or other signs pasted on automobiles
- *** students could create a data sheet of different items
- encourage students to develop and design their own billboard or advertisement for a certain cause
- have students compile a pamphlet consisting of billboard, advertisement, and bumper sticker copies that reflect values in American society

COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY

- explore the visual arts through computer software
- *** Adobe Photoshop; Fractal Designer, Fractal Painter, Fractal Sketch; Quark Express; Mums the Word; Room Designer; Landscape Designer; Adobe PageMaker are several suggested programs
- use graphic-based computer software to instruct students about design, desktop publishing, scanning, drawing, rendering, etc.
- investigate architectural and garden landscaping possibilities
- *** have students design their personal dream house complete with landscaping features
- have students design a classroom newspaper complete with a logo, news items, and photographs (or graphic images of photos)

Conclusion

Clearly, the visual arts are integral to teaching and learning in the 21st century. The arts are basic educational processes for they involve students with different abilities and from differing age groups in sensory perception. This perception, augmented by the use of art compositions, establishes a critical dialogue between the medium and the viewer. What one views, sees,

and observes in an art piece serves to create a relationship, much like the one that occurs between the reader and the text. With the visual arts, the processes of receiving conceptual images and later forming reactions to such images are inexorably bound to higher order thinking skills and numerous aspects of creativity. In our current educational setting, we must provide learners with possibilities to view, analyze, and respond to the arts. We must stimulate the inquiry, exploration, creativity, and examination capacities of each. We must offer each and every learner a means through which they may look, feel, and listen to an artwork. In doing so, we will not only relate our curricula to real life learning, but also afford our students greater opportunities for academic, social, and personal achievement.

The celebration of learning rests in the harmonious marriage between text and illustration. In his dedication, John Collier, author and illustrator of The Backyard, aptly combines the two:

> "To my father, who taught me to love art,
> and my mother, who taught me to love libraries."

SELECTED SOURCES FOR INVESTIGATION

Children's Art

- I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Children's Drawings and Poems from Terezin Concentration Camp, 1942-1944 - H. Volavkova, Ed. - 1993
- I Dream of Peace: Images of War by Children of Former Yugoslavia - UNICEF - 1994

Noteworthy Children's Literature Illustrators

Thomas Locker	David Macaulay	Graeme Base
Wendell Minor	Peter Catalanotto	David Wiesner
Maurice Sendak	Alan Say	Mike Wimmer
Barry Moser	Tom Feelings	Patricia Polacco
Susan Jeffers	Chris Van Allsburg	

Special Art Books

- An American Vision: Three Generations of Wyeth Art - Brandywine River Museum - 1987
- Surrational Images: Photomontages by Scott Mutter - University of Illinois Press - 1992
- Ivan Albright: A Retrospective - Art Institute of Chicago - 1984
- George Segal - S. Hunter & D. Hawthorne - 1984
- Andrew Wyeth: The Helga Pictures - J. Wilmerding - 1987
- Edward Hopper - L. Goodrich - 1983
- Cameraworks: David Hockney - L. Weschler - 1984

Other Interesting Resources

- The Big Picture: Murals of Los Angeles - M. Levick & S. Young - 1988 (murals depicting different parts of the city)
- You Are What You Drive - T. Couch - 1987 (stereotypic overview of car owners and their automobiles)
- Symbols of America - H. Morgan - 1986 (history and evolution of various designs)
- On the Edge: The East Village - W. Ervin - 1985 (photographs)
- Faces of the Enemy: Reflections of the Hostile Imagination - S. Keen - 1988 (posters, cartoons, advertisements, photographs)

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